



THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • FRIDAY • JANUARY 09, 2026 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 44 • LATE CITY EDITION



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SONAM WANGCHUK'S SPEECH AIMED TO QUELL VIOLENCE, WIFE TELLS SC

Jailed activist Sonam Wangchuk's wife, Gitanjali J Angmo, told the SC on Thursday that facts are being manipulated to portray him as a criminal

'NOT GIVEN FULL GROUNDS OF DETENTION'

Angmo said Wangchuk was neither given the "complete grounds" of his detention, not an opportunity for a representation against his arrest. "The tenor of the speech is not in any sense threatening the security of the state or that I will continue such activities or to propagate violence, but to quell it," Wangchuk was detained under the NSA

LEH DM STICKS TO CHARGES AGAINST ACTIVIST

■ Angmo, in her plea through senior advocate Kapil Sibal, said the unfortunate events of violence in Leh on September 24 cannot be attributed to actions or statements of Wangchuk in any manner
■ The Leh District Magistrate had earlier told the court Wangchuk "indulged in activities prejudicial to the security of the state"

12

MONTHS IS THE MAXIMUM DETENTION PERIOD UNDER THE STRINGENT NSA

More tariff terror as Don okay with Russia curbs bill

Trump greenlights bill that could impose 500% levy on India for buying Russian oil

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

INDIA could face punitive US trade action in the form of tariffs as high as 500% after President Donald Trump reportedly agreed to let a long-pending legislation on Russian sanctions move forward, potentially setting up a Senate vote as early as next week.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said on Wednesday that Trump had "greenlit" the bipartisan bill after they met at the White House. "President Trump will allow the sanctions bill to move forward," Graham said, and added that a vote could come soon, though the bill's fate in Congress remains uncertain.

The legislation, formally titled the Sanctioning Russia Act of 2025, seeks to impose steep tariffs and secondary sanctions, running as high as 500%, on countries that continue to do business with Russia, particularly those importing Russian energy. India and China, the world's two largest buyers of discounted Russian crude since the start of the Ukraine conflict, would be directly in the firing line.

"This will be well-timed, as

Ukraine is making concessions for peace and Putin is all talk, continuing to kill the innocents," Graham said.

The bill has been spearheaded by Graham alongside Democratic Senator Richard Blumenthal and has accumulated dozens of co-sponsors in the Senate, with a companion measure introduced in the House of Representatives. Its stated aim is to choke off funding for 'Russia's war efforts' by targeting energy revenues that have remained more or less steady despite earlier Western sanctions.

US exits the Solar Alliance

In a setback to global climate cooperation, Trump formally withdrew the US from the International Solar Alliance, a flagship renewable energy initiative co-led by India & France | PTI

imports from countries that "knowingly" purchase Russian-origin oil, gas, uranium and petroleum products.

The bill also mandates visa bans and asset freezes on senior Russian officials and foreign entities found to be supplying defence equipment to Moscow, while directing the Treasury Department to sanction Russian state-owned financial institutions.

Didi crashes ED's I-PAC raid party, seizes key documents



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee comes out of I-PAC chief Pratik Jain's house with a green folder in hand, which she said contained her party's documents | PTI

SUBHENDU MAITI @ Kolkata

THE Enforcement Directorate (ED)'s raids at the office of political consultancy firm I-PAC and the residence of its director Pratik Jain in Kolkata on Thursday in connection with a money laundering probe turned into high drama as West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee stormed in and took away some documents.

Mamata, who entered Jain's house at Loudon Street with police escort while the ED searches were still going on, came out with a green folder, which she

claimed contained details of TMC candidates for the upcoming Assembly polls.

"They were confiscating my party's documents and hard disks, which have details about our party candidates for the assembly polls. I have brought those back," she said.

I-PAC, which offers political consultancy to the TMC, also manages the party's IT and media operations.

Banerjee alleged ED officials walked away with TMC's internal strategy documents. "Is it the duty of the ED to collect political party data?" she asked.

She then proceeded to the I-PAC office in Salt Lake and spent an hour there. Her security personnel were seen taking away several files.

The ED said the raids were not against any political party, adding that simultaneous searches were conducted at 10 locations in Delhi and West Bengal in connection with a multi-crore coal scam.

Later in the day, the ED moved the Calcutta High Court against Mamata alleging interference in its investigation. The HC is expected to take up the matter on Friday.

VB-G RAM G ACT

K'taka to challenge new scheme in courts

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE State Cabinet on Thursday decided to challenge the Centre's new employment guarantee scheme, VB-G RAM G Act, in courts.

The decision gains significance with the Congress set to launch 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram' agitation against the Centre. The State government has also decided to hold special gram sabhas to create awareness against the 'anti-people' legislation.

"The Cabinet considers the VB-G RAM-G Act as an infringement of the constitutional right of the people for employment. The Cabinet unanimously decided not to accept the Act and challenge the same in the court of law," said Law and Parliamentary Affairs minister HK Patil.

With a few of the Gram Panchayats coming forward to challenge the Act, the government would consult the Advocate General on approaching the High Court or the Supreme Court.

GOVT TO ISSUE A-KHATA FOR IOL PROPERTIES: P4



including Sonne Gowda, filed a petition before the court in 2014 challenging the acquisition, claiming that they had purchased sites from the land owner (Gowda)," said a senior engineer.

CONTINUED ON P2

A child watches as a BDA bulldozer demolishes his house in Thanisandra on Thursday | KEVIN NASHON

BDA bulldozes 60 houses in Thanisandra

MOHAMMED YACOUB @ Bengaluru

AS part of land reclamation drive, Bengaluru Development Authority (BDA) on Thursday demolished over 60 houses at Thanisandra in Bengaluru North. The property is said to be worth around ₹80 crore.

On Thursday, around 150 police personnel, 50 BDA staff, including revenue officers and land surveyors, carried out the demolition drive, deploying bulldozers to raze the structures. "Since it is a BDA property, it is not mandatory for notice to encroachers," said an official.

The drive was halted in the evening, leaving barely a few houses in 2 acres untouched.

The BDA officials said that it

has arranged shelter for the evictees at Hegde Nagar Community Hall and would deploy mobile toilets. "Food and water will also be provided temporarily," said an official.

The residents, however, contested the BDA action and claimed they have been paying property taxes.

Senior BDA officials, who were monitoring the demolition drive, said that 22 unauthorised constructions had come up on two acres, as part of Arkavathy Layout. "The land survey numbers 28/1 and 28/2 in Saraipalya, Thanisandra Village were acquired in 2004 by the BDA from Muni Sonne Gowda, son of Thamme Gowda. As many as 33 persons,

People's scientist who gave Nature a voice



DR VINITAA HAPTE

FOUNDER & DIRECTOR, TERRE POLICY CENTRE

MADHAV Gadgil, the ecologist many called the people's scientist, passed away in Pune on the night of January 7, after a brief illness. He was 83. With him goes a rare kind of public intellectual — one who believed that science must walk hand in hand with society. That nature is best protected when people are trusted as its custodians.

Gadgil lived by the ethic he quietly embodied: simple living and high thinking. A Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan awardee, and a recipient of the United Nations' Champion of the Earth Award, he was globally respected, teaching and lecturing in 16 countries. Yet his work remained deeply rooted in India's landscapes — its forests, hills and villages — and in the lives of those who depend on them.



He founded the Indian Institute of Ecology and was instrumental in shaping India's environmental consciousness. The Silent Valley movement, widely regarded as the country's first major environmental movement, bears his imprint. Later, as chairman of the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel, he led the preparation of a report that continues to challenge policy-makers and citizens alike. It asked difficult questions about development, biodiversity and justice — and refused easy answers.

What set Gadgil apart was his ex-

traordinary accessibility. He spoke in simple, lucid Marathi, translating complex ecological science into ideas communities could claim as their own. Knowledge, he believed, must never remain locked in institutions. His research consistently foregrounded marginalised voices and championed community-led conservation across forests, wetlands and fragile ecosystems.

One of his most enduring contributions was the establishment of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve in 1986, now India's largest protected area. It reflected his conviction that conservation thrives when people are partners, not obstacles. To students, whom he mentored generously, he offered the same message: begin with what surrounds you. Observe closely and care deeply.

Gadgil is survived by a son and a daughter. His wife, Sulochana Gadgil, a distinguished meteorologist, passed away in July 2025. His final rites were held at Pune's Vaikuntha crematorium on January 8.

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